



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE SEIZES NEARLY EIGHT TONS OF RARE FOSSILS SMUGGLED INTO UNITED STATES FROM ARGENTINA

Specimens include fossilized dinosaur eggs and prehistoric pinecones

TUCSON – Acting on a lead received through Interpol, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents executed a seizure warrant at the Tucson Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Showcase earlier this month, seizing nearly eight tons of rare fossils, including prehistoric pinecones and dinosaur eggs.

ICE obtained the seizure warrant after receiving information that a vendor at one of the nation's largest gem and mineral shows was potentially selling fossils illegally smuggled out of Argentina. ICE agents conducted undercover surveillance and obtained digital images of the suspicious specimens. After examining the images and conferring with representatives of the Argentinean Paleontological Society, authorities at Interpol advised ICE that the fossils have significant scientific value and it was "highly probable" they are of Argentinean origin.

Fossils, like cultural relics, are protected by the Argentinean government and removing them from that country without government permission is against the law.

"These prehistoric treasures rightfully belong to Argentina and the Argentinean people," said Roberto Medina, special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in Arizona. "It is shameful that someone would plunder specimens like these from another nation simply to pleasure hobbyists and line their own pockets."

In all, Tucson ICE agents seized an estimated 14,000 pounds of fossils, including three dinosaur eggs valued at more than \$4,000 each. The items were being sold by an Argentinean-based vendor known as the Rhodo Company. ICE agents say the investigation into the fossil smuggling scheme is ongoing and no arrests have yet been made.

#ICE#